

A FUSION RETRO PUBLICATION
SAMPLER MARCH 2021

Op

COMMODORE

ZZAP! 64

COSMOS DESIGNS

We take a look at all their games!

SOUL FORCE

STEVE SHIELDS' ZZAP BACK
ADVENTURE TRAIL WITH COLIN BELL
10 REVIEWS PLUS PREVIEWS

AND
ME!!



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March 2021

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SAMPLER

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Managing Editor: Chris Wilkins **Art & Illustration:** Oliver Frey **Adventure Editor:** Colin Bell

Staff Writer: Lloyd Mangram **Copy-editor:** Gareth Perch

Guest ZZAP! Writers: Robin Hogg, Steve Shields, Ian Osbourne **Contributing Writers:** Mat Allen (reviewer), Simon Butler, Andrew Fisher (Prof. Brian Strain), Graeme Mason, Paul Morrison (reviewer), Chris Wilkins (reviewer), Christian Simpson (Perifractic)

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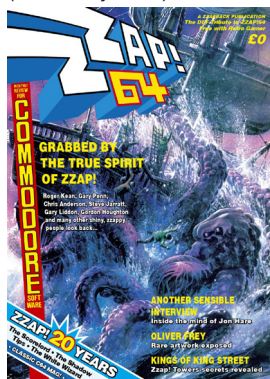
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MY SWAN SONG

Some said that ZZAP! 64 was born with a silver spoon in its mouth, thanks to the established success of sister title CRASH (no booing from the back there!). Perhaps there's a grain of truth in that, but more importantly ZZAP! got off to a flying start with launch editor Chris Anderson, who went on to found Future Publishing, and the stellar qualities of its team of young writers. When I took over the reins from Chris with issue 4, we were already whizzing up the newsagents' sales charts, helped along by Oliver Frey's amazing covers and a devil-may-care attitude combined with a serious regard for the games reviewed. If we needed any further confirmation of ZZAP!'s place in the firmament the worthy Commodore Computing International provided it when publisher Antony Jacobson slandered ZZAP! as a 'fluffy lollipop magazine'. Grist to the mill, his snipe led to the wonderful cover of issue 15 (July 1986) for US Gold's Leader Board – Lolita, lollipops and lurking

teenage lechers...oh, and a golfer. I had fun writing: 'ZZAP! owes a deep debt of gratitude to the publisher of CCI for pointing out to us that there's more money to be made from talking about lollipops (even fluffy ones) than



from boring old computer games. Apart from an issue packed with helpful hints on how to suck the various flavours (starts page 202), comparisons between the frozen and sticky — sweet varieties, things you can do with the sticks once sucking is complete and vital first aid tips for frozen lollies that come

apart at the seams on the first bite – there are a few more reviews (of computer games) than usual.' Chris and I were just the first of a run of editors who each brought their own flavour (fluffy or otherwise) to the pages of Britain's best-loved C64 magazine. And it didn't stop at our shores, migrating to Europe, especially to Italy where the name is still in use and even to that graveyard of British magazine hopes, the US of A. Neither did the 'death of 8-bit' dim its verve, so that via a Def Tribute and the recent annuals, in the hands of Fusion Retro ZZAP! 64 now rides again on the crest of a new wave of C64 releases...and the proof is in your hands.

Roger McKean

A recent photo proving that Lloyd Mangram is not a figment of anyone's imagination. This was him at Rog's leaving party last week. "Bye Rog!"



ROGER, ROGER



Who would have thought that we could bring ZZAP! 64! back to a captive audience! Yet here we are... I want to thank Roger for listening to my crazy ideas over the years and backing pretty much anything and everything I have suggested.

I have always called Rog and Oli my second Dad collectively — they

have both watched out for me, and made sure I am following the correct path and called me out when I have strayed.

With this new format of ZZAP! 64, expect to see in its pages everything that has always made the magazine so special.

Love you Dad(s).

Chris Webb

You really need to know who to blame! Here is our panel of games reviewers – all kids (at heart)

Perifractic aka **CHRISTIAN SIMPSON** is a husband (to Ladyfractic), father of 3 (furbabies), and actor-writer with a problematic love of retrocomputing. So problematic in fact that the only way to quench that thirst was to start YouTube channel "Perifractic's Retro Recipes" so he could play with those beautiful vintage machines every day (usually the C64 of course - where his favourite game is Ghostbusters mwahahaha!). He's been making retro music since before it was retro, and



you may even recognize him from small roles in big movie franchises, though he says nothing was as exciting as being part of the ZZAP! 64 team. As a writer and original ZZAP! subscriber we know he'll be right at home here at ZZAP! Towers. <http://perifractic.com>

Y'CHEERS BERRYFRACTIC! SAY HI TO LADYFRACTIC FOR ME!



Still gaming in his (very late) 40s and hobby to equally mad gamer Shelly and their massive consoles collection, former staff writer **ROBIN HOGG** flew the Newsfield nest for rather different climates and is now breaking bits of planes for a living, which is ironic as he did much the same flying his beloved flight simulators at ZZAP! Towers. Halcyon days, he says with no hint of rose tint on his glasses (just don't mention Operation Thunderbolt). Favourite games? *Armalyte* as he is



a massive *Gradius* fan, and *Project: Stealth Fighter* which happens to be his all time favourite C64 game. On a final note (guilty conscience?), Robin would like to refer readers to the title of his tips section of old if they found any tips and pokes didn't quite work as planned. Excuses, excuses.

A ZZAP!64 reader since Issue 4, **PAUL MORRISON** unsuccessfully applied for a reviewer's job at the mag when just 17. Proving that dreams can come true, Paul is finally an official ZZAP! staffer, but can be found writing about 8-bit games in various other places, too. A gamer since the 1970s, and briefly the MAME World Record holder on *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*, when he's not welded to his keyboard for writing purposes, Paul enjoys nothing more than chatting with like-minded



folks and assuring them that *Paradroid* is, indeed, the best game ever. Outside gaming, when he isn't dealing with a moody teenager or helping his youngest son with yet another maths problem, he can often be found sobbing into his Newcastle United scarf or insisting that 1980s rock music is still miles better than all that modern rubbish.

It was a warm weekend morning sometime in March 1984 when two parents gave their son a Commodore 64 and had no idea what they would unleash. More than thirty years later, **MAT ALLEN** is a notable member of the Commodore community and scene under the handle 'Mayhem', part of the GameBase64 preservation project, with arguably the most complete Commodore cartridge collection known. He has contributed to ZZAP! 64 during



both its original era and the two fan-made magazines, together with several other Commodore related publications, and once again brings his own brand of insight, wit, experience and judgement to the table in assessing some of today's popular releases.

Be afraid, be very afraid...

CHRIS WILKINS has been around in retro circles for some time – first dabbling in retro events, then retro magazines, and then retro books with none other than the editor of this very 'issue' of ZZAP! 64. He has now settled into producing yearly publications of yesteryear Newsfield magazines that are aptly called *Annuals*. He got his first 8-bit computer back in 1982 after nagging his parents for an arcade experience in the bedroom – he had to wait a good few years before that actually



happened. These days Chris plays on the current gen systems but finds himself collecting all the systems he wished he'd had as a kid. There is always the next purchase – there is still so much to collect. (I have a very understanding wife!)

ANDREW FISHER - The writer behind Professor Brian Strain's technical column in the pages of Commodore Force (incorporating ZZAP 64), Andrew worked on fanzines and diskmag (including the long-running Scene World) through the 1990s and 2000s before becoming a regular in the pages of Retro Gamer. His retro gaming collection grew over the years, but the C64 remains his first love. In recent years he has composed



music for new C64 titles, acted as a game tester and curated a website dedicated to SEUCK. In 2008 he published his first book dedicated to C64 games and has contributed to several retro books since (as writer & proofreader). He is delighted to be involved in the ZZAP *Annuals* and the relaunch of the mag.



SOUL FORCE

Protovision — 2021

The star system of Soultron is a peaceful one, and has been for as long as history can remember. Despite that, there are those who know that danger could arrive at any time and with that in mind, have secretly developed the *Soul Force* fighter. This revolutionary craft could be the only thing that stands between Soultron and destruction, but the hope has always been that it would never need to be used...

Unfortunately, the inevitable has happened. A hostile alien race has discovered the Soultron system and launched an attack! Laying waste to every planet in the system, they remain uncooperative and uncommunicative. They have left Soultron with no alternative but to deploy the *Soul Force* fighter to take on and defeat this terrible threat.

Only one person has the skills to pilot this craft... and that, my friend, is you. Beginning on Soultron's moon, Lena, you must blast your way through the alien hordes, discover what they're planning and



put a stop to it. Soultron is a small but varied system, and you must fly over land, underground, underwater, through deep space, asteroid fields and mysterious temples, taking out as many opposing forces as possible before taking on the enemy's flagship.

Should you prevail and destroy the flagship, it's possible you may be able to obtain the location of the enemy's homeworld. If so, you just might be able to fly there, destroy them and end this menace, once and for all!



I've been waiting for this for absolutely ages, and now that it's finally here, the question is: has it been worth the wait? You can already tell from my glee-filled face that the answer is "Ohhh yeahhhh!"

Soul Force begins much like any other horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up, but once you start making progress you can see that the care and attention lavished on it has elevated it way beyond the masses. The graphics are fantastic, with some excellent enemy sprites and superb parallax scrolling. Enemy attack waves may be mere cannon fodder at times, but there are some very imaginative bosses and the level layouts, unlike most shmups, have enough surprises to keep you interested.



I'm a big Gradius fan and looked forward to Soul Force. Now it's here I'm playing a quality shooter with great presentation, nice enemy variety and a lovely bit of parallax scrolling. I liked the different bosses and inter-level images which suit the forthcoming battle. The levels may be shorter than you expect but you get 20 of them with a good level of graphical detail and variety. Not an Armalyte beater but very good nonetheless.

Now, the hype has been strong with this one, especially to someone as myself who loves a shooter and with such excellent presentation. It looks good, everything moves incredibly smoothly with barely any flicker or drop in the multiplexor, and the layers of parallel scrolling are sublime. It plays extremely well, the difficulty options increase in a rational curve, it never feels unfair, and the password system relieves some of the frustration of dying. A couple of the levels move at a faster pace which certainly keeps you on your toes. Soul Force is not perfect however – the music is nice but lacks the oomph of say a Rainbow Arts or Lasse Oorni title; the bosses are partly underwhelming; and on at least one level



the enemy bullets can colour merge with parts of the background. Is it going to displace the likes of Armalyte and Enforcer at the top of the C64 shmup tree? No. But it more than lives up to the hype and you get an awful lot of enjoyable game for your money.

PRESENTATION 95%

Good manual, high score save and excellent inter-level screens.

GRAPHICS 93%

Superb animation and use of colour, fantastic parallax scrolling too.

SOUND 86%

Most music tracks are variations on a theme but all are good.

HOOKABILITY 96%

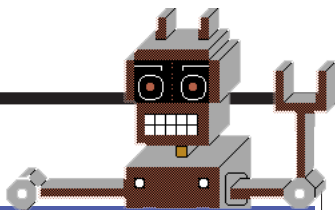
Exceptional shoot 'em up action draws the player in immediately.

LASTABILITY 94%

Twenty challenging levels to blast through, with four difficulty levels

OVERALL 95%

Soul Force is an instant classic, and arguably one of the best C64 shmup of all time.



Attack of the PETSCII Robots

David Murray (The 8-Bit Guy), digital download and boxed editions, 2021

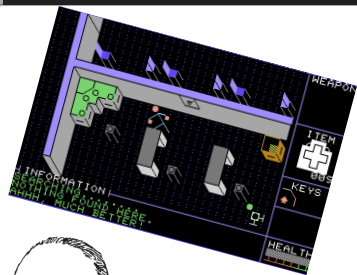
Future human settlements have come under attack from dangerous robots. Arriving by shuttle, you must locate weapons and items. Searching a background object takes time, leaving you vulnerable. You can move objects to create obstacles or herd the robots — maybe into that trash compactor, or near an explosive fuel canister perhaps? Items include the medikits to heal, keycards to open locked doors, the EMP to freeze robots for a few seconds and a magnet

to confuse them. Three weapons are available — pistol, plasma gun and time bombs; these are deployed before exploding a few seconds later. Bridges and an automated raft will help you cross water, while the elevator moves between the floors of a building. Destroy all the robots, find the transporter and head off to the next of the nine maps at three difficulty levels. There are versions for PET, Commander X16, VIC-20, the C64 (that can be put into monochrome PET mode), and the enhanced C64 version with improved graphics/music.



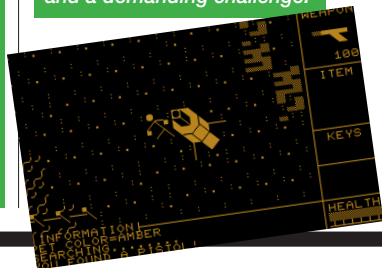
This game features pretty incredible use of PETSCII. I believe in “the greatest graphics are in your mind” and sometimes less is more, so the game really sparked my imagination of what’s really going on for our hero. For that I rate the graphics of the “worst” version, the best! Indeed when I tried the all-singing sprite-based version, it ironically lost something for me.

As for gameplay, at first the controls are confusing, however I played with a Super Nintendo gamepad thanks to the handy dandy provided adapter — a “Super” experience (badum-tsh!) Initially it seems overly complex that there are different controls for firing direction vs. walking direction... until you start to appreciate that this uniquely allows you to run away from a robot, whilst shooting behind you! “Got him!”. The puzzles, keycards, objects, and multiple ways to trap or trick robots aren’t for the faint hearted. And the minimal checkpoints can become frustrating. But the fantastically produced user guide provides several helpful tips for each level — so your faint heart is likely to fall in love with this atmospheric game.



The PETSCII graphics take a bit of getting used to but it does give the

game a sharp, crisp look. I liked the quick movement of the player around the maps which made it a pacey game, especially as it’s easy to quickly get into trouble coming into range of a rollerbot’s lasers. Fortunately you can equally quickly run away and recover as the robots are tough nuts to crack and there’s a great sense of satisfaction in eventually defeating the likes of evilbot (fire while running away is my best ‘strategy’). It’s a nice touch to have the maps in the manual given the limited field of view which often caused me to get lost. Maybe it’s the graphics or the lack of robot variety but ultimately I wasn’t overly excited by the game although I appreciated its depth with multiple maps and a demanding challenge.





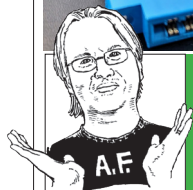
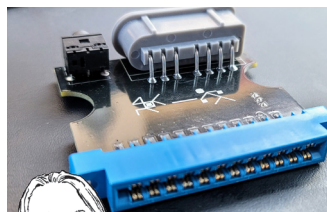
Showdown

Badger Punch Games,
Bitmapsoft, 2020

Yeeeeeee-
haaawwwwww!
Welcome to

Showdown, a rootin' tootin' Wild West shootin' game like no other! Well, actually it is like some others, namely the ancient Outlaw. In *Showdown*, you find yourself at the opposite side of a dusty patch of desert to your opponent. Your objective is to shoot said opponent five times to win the duel... but of course, if he can shoot you five times first, you lose. Clearly medical science is amazing in the old West, as most of us would find it hard to recover from being riddled with so many bullets. Either that or the cowboys are using rubber bullets. Or are skilled in the art of wounding.

Anyway, it's not a standard face-to-face duel, so you do have a chance to utilise some tactics during your battles, which take place over a number of dusty locales. This being a desert, there are cacti all over the place and they're handy for hiding behind. Be careful though, as a few well-aimed shots will



The pace is somewhat higher than his previous RTS Planet X2.1, and

the map layouts reminded me of the classic Laser Squad. Real-time combat is a double-edged sword however; certain sections become very tricky as the robots pursue you. I enjoyed the enhanced C64 version but appreciate the artistry of the monochrome version (cleverly simulating amber and green screens). A neat touch was the PETSCII playing card symbols used as the keycards. Control requires learning a number of keys, unless you have the SNES pad and adapter. With multiple maps and three difficulty levels there is depth here, however I felt it lacked the addictive spark to bring me back.

The 8-Bit Guy has designed a special user port adapter, allowing Commodore users to connect the SNES controller for playing *Attack of the PETSCII Robots*. The PET adapter has a small speaker to play sound effects, a hardware hack dating back to that computer's early days. The keyboard is still needed for menus and to quit the game. The adapter is part of the Standard and Autographed boxed editions of the game from: <http://www.the8bitguy.com/product/petscii-robots/>

PRESENTATION 80%

Simple UI and superb user guide make it good, but bonus points for a SNES hardware adapter in the box!

GRAPHICS 75%

Yes it's partly "just" PETSCII but what STUNNING use of it.

SOUND 56%

tandard effects and five reasonable tunes with robotic sounds

HOOKABILITY 70%

You'll get frustrated with the C64 controls, and puzzles, but come back for more...

LASTABILITY 73%

...but maybe not that many times.

OVERALL 75%

An interesting idea that slowly becomes frustrating and repetitive.

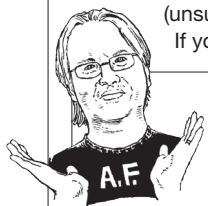


TEST



wipe out any vegetation, no matter how hardy it may be. Once in a while a stagecoach will make its way up the road, and this also provides some very handy cover. From time

to time, a box of explosives will appear on the battlefield which, if shot, will explode (unsurprisingly). If your opponent

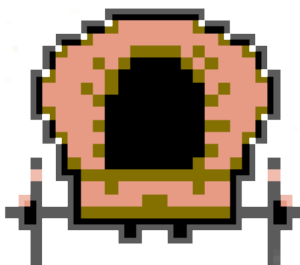


Showdown is a rootin' tootin' simple little game coming

down to shoot or be shot. The single player computer opponent is a mean son of a gun but it is best fun with 2 players taking pot shots at each other, while getting the odd lucky explosion to wipe the smile off your rival's face. It's pretty frantic dodging bullets and running to collect refills or hide behind a cactus but once you've won and lost a few games there's not a lot else to do. It's nicely put together though, the overall look and feel is good and it does make for a nice little diversion, albeit a brief one.



is standing near one of these boxes when it explodes, he'll be knocked



to the ground and it will count as a hit. You'll need a good supply of ammo to keep up your attack of course,



I remember playing Outlaw on my Atari VCS, but not in my craziest cheese dreams did I think I'd be playing an updated version in 2021. Still, here we are and very nice it is too. Shooting cowboys is always a bit of a laugh, but when all you have to do is shoot the same cowboy over and over again, the game soon wears out its welcome. Perhaps different opponents would have given the single player game some longevity? It's well programmed, and I daresay you probably couldn't have a better version of Outlaw on the C64, but unless you have a second player to join in the fun, you'll be done with Showdown in an hour, tops.

but fortunately bullets can be found lying around the landscape, and picking these up will instantly reload your weapon.

Should you wish for a more friendly-yet-competitive gunfight, a two-player mode is available so you can duel with a friend. The gameplay is no different to the single-player game,



but it's always more fun
to shoot your
mates, isn't
it?



*Hey Slick,
this is
definitely
the slickest
version of
the Outlaw*

genre that

*I've played since it first
appeared in the arcades 45
years ago. It's very pretty
and the music is nice and
it moves very quickly, but
sadly the overall game
is lacking. The explosive
boxes are a nice touch,
as with the requirement
to reload and diagonal
bullets, but there are no
gameplay options, one
map, and no difficulty
setting for one player
mode. That AI comes in
real hot out the blocks.
Good for short bursts but
not much longer.*

PRESENTATION 66%

It's all very neat and tidy, without
being spectacular in any way.

GRAPHICS 50%

Nice hi-res sprites, but little else of
note.

SOUND 74%

The music is technically nice, but not
very Western-y.

HOOKABILITY 70%

Gaming doesn't get simpler, and it's
fun for a while.

LASTABILITY 48%

Good for the occasional two-player
ramp, but solo player will soon lose
interest.

OVERALL 55%

A nicely executed version of an
extremely simple game.

JUANJE JUEGA IN SINVERLAND

Picaro Games, free download

YouTube and Twitch
streamer Juanje
Juega specialises
in retro games, but now
a malevolent artificial
intelligence has zapped
him into the games
themselves! Juanje must
complete a task on each of
the 23 levels to reveal the
key and the exit door. This
could be collecting all the
coins, working out how to
win at Pong or knocking
out rivets on Donkey
Kong's skyscraper. Juanje
starts with three lives and
each screen is played
against a time limit; run out
of time and a life is lost.

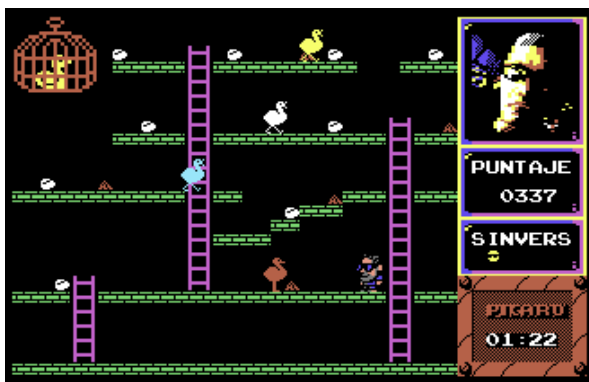
Contact with enemies will
reduce his energy, shown
by the portrait top right
gradually turning into a
skull. Lose all the energy
and a life is taken. Juanje
can run, jump and climb
up and down ladders —
but can he escape from

Chuckie Egg, Bruce Lee,
E.T., Bubble Bobble and
more to make it back
to the real world?



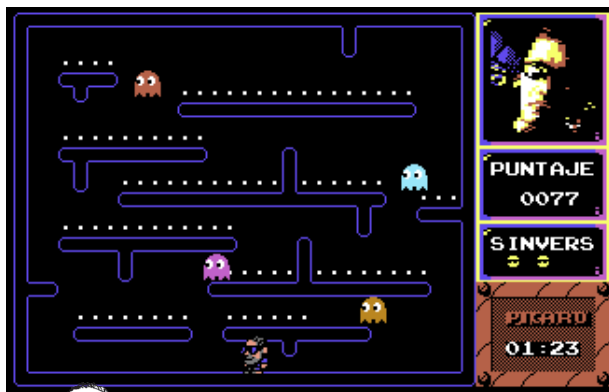
*I was
pleasantly
surprised
when I
downloaded
this game,*

*as it does a good job of
capturing the flavour of the
retro games it emulates.
The cute main sprite is the
highlight, although one or
two of the enemy sprites
are poor (notably the ninja
on the Bruce Lee screen).
The music is pretty good
too. There are several
levels that will prove
very frustrating, thanks
to some poor collision
detection – I found myself
falling through platforms
and ladders quite a lot.
Persevere and there is
plenty of challenge in a
decent if not quite top-
notch title.*





Wasn't quite sure what to expect when firing up this title, but was pleasantly surprised by its themes and execution. It's not quite WarioWare, but each new screen is a welcome pastiche of an existing retro property including Pac-Man, ET, and Bruce Lee, along with then figuring out how to solve it. The collision detection is a little unfair so I'm thankful for the Ultimate style energy bar otherwise it would prove to be too frustrating. It won't set the Commodore scene alight but you'll have a lot of fun trying to complete it with the highest score.



I don't know where Sinverland is, but I'd like to spend some time there as

it's the kind of deranged, classic game-infested place that appeals to my strange mind. Iconic characters always have an appeal, and they're used quite creatively here. The opening Pong room baffled me for a while, but once I figured it out I got where this game was going and went along for the ride. Some of the graphics are very authentic, but the game as a whole is too simple.

PRESENTATION 72%

Clever energy display and onscreen look, but no real options.

GRAPHICS 79%

Main sprite has detailed overlay, and levels mostly resemble their source game.

SOUND 82%

A good mix of retro tunes from some talented composers.

HOOKABILITY 78%

The first screen is tricky but the idea soon becomes clear.

LASTABILITY 68%

Once completed there is little to draw you back

OVERALL 73%

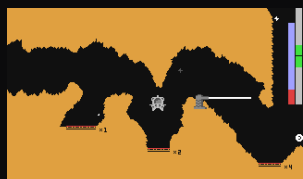
A clever nostalgia trip with some flaws.

NEPTUNE LANDER ELITE

C64Mark,
profits to charity

The rugged terrain of faraway Neptune will make landing your spacecraft there difficult. As you explore 40 increasingly complex caverns, there is a choice of landing pad. The more difficult the landing area, the higher the score multiplier. Three different vehicles are available — easy, normal and hard — with the latter having reduced thrust and fuel capacity but higher score multipliers. The fuel meter and vertical speed measure are on the right of the screen, with the speed meter flashing if you are moving too fast to land safely. Watch out for mining lasers, EMP beacons that disable thrust, and bonus icons give extra points, fuel or ships when collected. A six-screen Training section helps you learn the controls, while high scores can be saved to disk. Profits from the digital download are going to the Centre for Computing History. Safe landings!

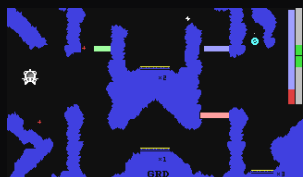




SCORE 003840 LEVEL 06 SHIPS 04



SCORE 000734 LEVEL 02 SHIPS 03



SCORE 011863 LEVEL 21 SHIPS 02

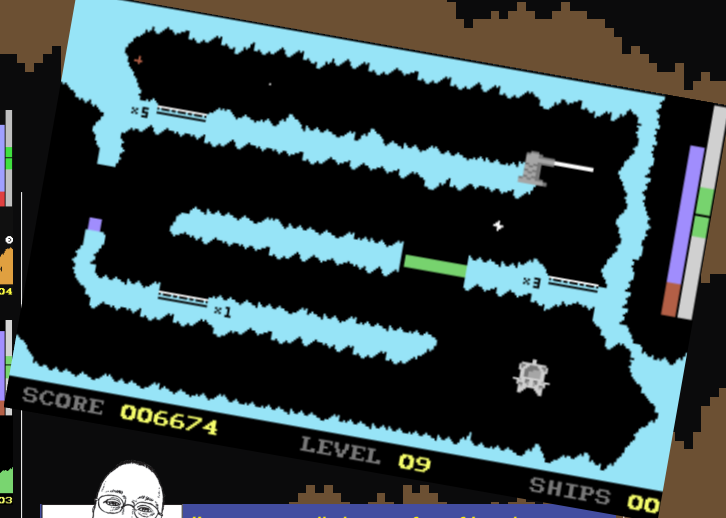


SCORE 000000 LEVEL 04 SHIPS 03



This has some interesting upgrades to the classic Lunar Lander mechanics,

and is a solid debut title from C64Mark. The Training section is very well thought out, and the first few levels get gradually more difficult. However, there are some difficulty spikes (such as Level 9's Mission Improbable) that are hard to get past. Decent graphics and music (simultaneously with the simple effects) are appreciated. Great fun but needs a bit more tweaking.



I've never really been a fan of Lander games, but they keep appearing so clearly those ancient mechanics resonate with many players. I can see why; programmed well, as Neptune Lander Elite is, this type of game is a real test of skill and a joy to play.

The controls and collision detection are accurate, but it's still easy to panic and hold a direction or button too long, leading to innumerable deaths which are your own stupid fault. There's a big risk/reward element here too... is it worth negotiating tricky gaps for a higher score or extra lives when you can just land safely and progress? Personally, I can't resist trying...



In space, no one can hear you get grey hairs. That's what NLE does with its moon sized

tension as I tap thrusters gingerly to squeeze through horrendously tight spaces. It may be basic but inertia and gravity are punishing bosses. NLE is easy to get into, addictive and challenging. Levels are well designed, with a deceptively simple but tricky game mechanic and a nice variety of landers/difficulties alongside an always welcome training mode. Enjoyable, just have hair dye on standby.

PRESENTATION 86%

Excellent tutorial mode and good title screen options, including the ability to invert the controls.

GRAPHICS 48%

Simple in style but portray the action well.

SOUND 71%

Some enjoyable short tunes and simplistic FX.

HOOKABILITY 81%

The Training mode helps ease you in, and it starts off relatively easy.

LASTABILITY 83%

Teeth-grindingly difficult in later screens.

OVERALL 83%

A clever update of a classic game.



"THEY CALLED IT 'STALAG ZZAP!'"

ZZAP!

RRAP

I thought I had done with all this, but here I am again 125 years later asking our loyal ZZAP! 64 fans to write in so I can have the pleasure for giving out my worldly advice. The magazine has somewhat

shrunk — Roger tells me it's an age thing, and who can argue. It still has all the ZZAP! 64 trimmings, all wrapped up in a byte sized package. Please do write in to me : LM@zapmagazine.co.uk

AMIGA DAYZ!!!

Dear Lloyd,
Whhhhaaaaaa!!!! The last issue was ZZAP! Amiga! Where did the Amiga go! All well and good making sure the C64 (and my poor C128) get some coverage... but ripping all the Amiga content out.... noooooooooo! I shall immediately go and pretend I am offended and create a petition and force 100,000 signatures somehow so it has to be debated in parliament!

Then I'll play The Settlers on my 030 8MB A1200 and boot up the CDTV for the best version of Xenon 2.

Tick tick boing!

Yours chequeredly,

J. Miner.

Defence of European Amiga Delusion

*Amiga coverage you say!
Well the editor of this
very magazine told me
something in confidence,
so do not tell anyone I
said this, but it looks
like a ZZAP! Amiga
magazine is in the
works and here is the
cover.*

*Remember —
Mum's the word!*

LM

AN OCEAN LIFE FOR ME!

Hi!

So glad to be able to subscribe to the new ZZAP! 64 I'd never read the magazine until years after the 8-bits died — I was a CPC guy but had played the C64 before thanks to my much older than me stepbrother. Loved the sounds of Ocean Loader 4, hearing the better quality speech on Ghostbusters and actually enjoying Outrun on his C64.. I now have my own C64 and with the help of the SD2IEC and Easyflash, can play any game I want and I keep finding great games to play.

Patrick



*Thanks for writing in Patrick and for subscribing.
We are huge fans here of the SID chip — check
out remix.kwed.org for some great Ocean remixes.*

LM

ADVERTISING FOR THE OLD

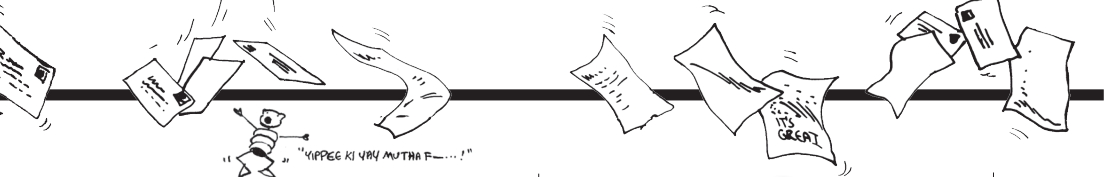
Dear Lloyd,

Please ask the powers that be about considering reprinting 1 classic advert in each issue. All spruced up and looking lovely in full colour. First vote goes to *Sheep in Space* if you please !
Cheers, Laurence.

*...goes to check if this is possible. Oh Roger, can
I ask you something please!!!*

LM





OLD IS THE NEW YOUNG

Dear Lloyd,

As a long time (1983) Commodore user, I'm very happy for the efforts of the ZZAP! 64 Team to keep this vintage computing adventure alive. I have purchased every annual release that I'm aware of and all have been topnotch quality. When I saw the announcement of the new magazine I subscribed right away. Really looking forward to holding it in my hand. There is no better feeling than an actual physical product you can flip through. These will definitely find a special spot with the rest of my Commodore collection.

Thank you for all your hard work and keeping the Commodore 64 legacy going. I'm sure no one back then could have imagined the following this little computer would generate nearly 40 years later. I think we can safely predict another 40 years with all the modern derivatives that have been released.

Michael Valentine
Virginia, USA

Well Michael, I wasn't a young man back then and now I am really getting rather retro myself. Mrs LM has often said my knees make the clicking sound of a C64 keyboard when I climb the stairs to bed each night. 40 years from now....oh deary me!

LM

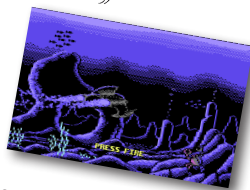
SPECAHOLIC IN NEED OF HELP

Dear Lloyd,

After a delay of thirty years, I've finally upgraded from a ZX Spectrum to a Commodore 64. The music is great but I'm having trouble adjusting to the stretchy pixels and weird colours! What games would you recommend for a recovering Specaholic? No Spectrum ports please.

Yours, Dennis

Upgrade is the key word here Dennis — welcome at last to the 8-bit future! Check the reviews in this very issue — there are some great games to choose from, that cater for all tastes.



LM

A TRUE FAN

Hi,

Reading ZZAP! 64, getting thrashed by Gary Cole on every shoot em up going and drinking lucozade on the doorstep. This was 1985 now 2021. I'm still getting thrashed by Gary Cole but by an even bigger margin.

Is playing a C64 now better now than the past? Damm right it is. You have an emulator, a Mini, a Maxi, 4K TV, Galencia, Sam's Journey, Soulforce and too many others to mention.

But some things never change ZZAP! 64, still the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be (phrase blatantly stolen from Bret Hart).

Still from somewhere in the galaxy.

Daren Wood

*Gushing here Daren — thanks for the compliments. I take full responsibility for the quality of this great magazine, being it's longest server and *cough* eldest and all. I jest of of course, we had, and still have a great passionate team here at ZZAP! Towers.*

LM



THUNGLE ACTION



ZZAP! 64 ~~SHACK~~ Review

Each issue, a game is picked that was commercially released after the last stand-alone issue of ZZAP! was published in November 1992 — this issue it is **Chicken**, released by **CP Verlag/Electric Boys, 1995**.

The red truck and the blue truck had a race... Inspired by arcade game Head-On, two trucks are racing around a maze of roads. Options include 1 or 2 players, the rate random pick-ups appear (fast, medium or slow) and the number of hits to win a round. Collecting the girder gives the "crunch power" to attack the opposing truck, the score panel's colour showing who is in control.

Hearts in the panel show the hits remaining, and more can be picked up. Pressing Fire activates your current power-up, while holding Fire swaps between the two power-ups held. The oilcan deposits oil that spins an



opponent around, while the match sets a fire that damages any truck.

Manual and automatic shields protect a truck while flashing, and the piston repairs damage. The joystick pick-up reverse controls, until you pick up the spanner to repair them. Bonus objects boost the

player's score, and the bag lets you steal any icon your opponent is carrying. How's your driving?



Imported to the UK by Electric Boys and the US by CMD, this was a fun little game that passed many C64 fans by. The trucks themselves are well drawn and animated, and I particularly liked the old-fashioned sprite when you are reduced to one hit. The computer provides a tough opponent, but it really comes to life in two-player mode. It turns into a cat-and-mouse chase as you try to avoid the dropped hazards and home in on the useful icons. It does lack a few options, such as choosing which course to play, but there is a challenge to survive through as many levels as you can. This would have made a perfect budget game, created by the late John Ferrari who had several budget hits. Even at the higher mid-range price it was worth picking up – so don't be a chicken, give it a bash.

PRESENTATION 70%

Good looking menus and a useful splash screen of the game icons but lacking extra features.

GRAPHICS 75%

Chunky trucks and easy to recognise items, but mundane backgrounds to drive around.

SOUND 45%

Lacks any music and there are only basic sound effects.

HOOKABILITY 79%

The premise is easy to grasp and smashing fun for the first few games.

LASTABILITY 71%

Needed a bit more variety in layouts and backgrounds to truly last.

OVERALL 73%

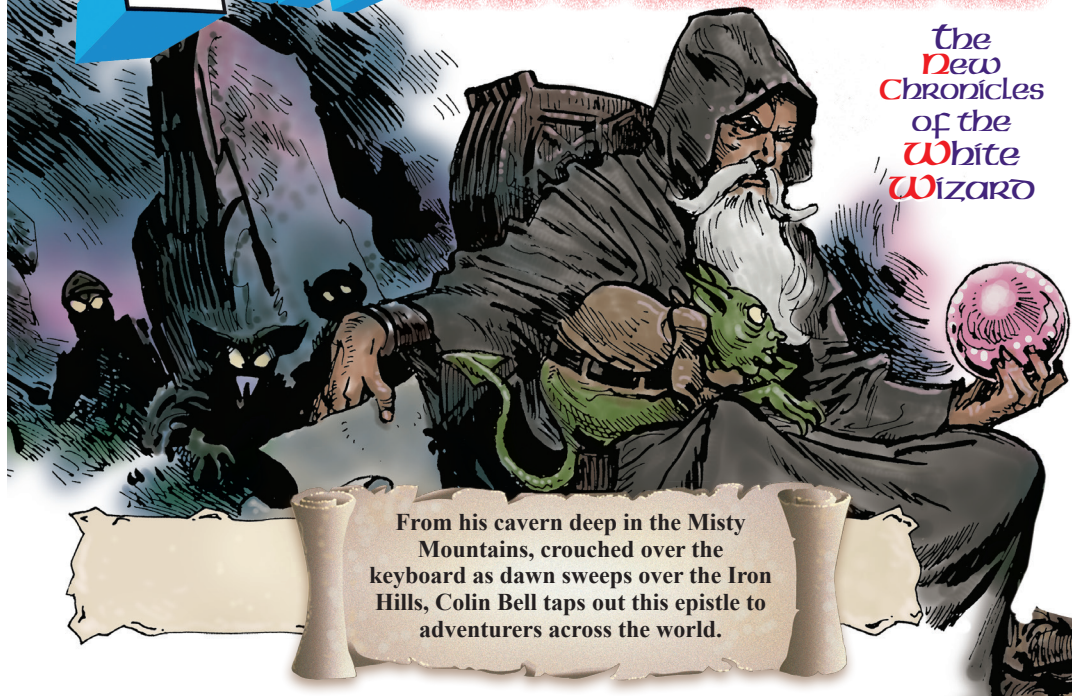
Bucketloads of fun for two players, finger-licking difficult for one.



For those C64 owners who would rather use their words
than wiggle their joysticks

adventure

the
New
Chronicles
of the
White
Wizard



From his cavern deep in the Misty
Mountains, crouched over the
keyboard as dawn sweeps over the Iron
Hills, Colin Bell taps out this epistle to
adventurers across the world.



h! Greetings
my fellow
adventurers,
your
presence
here is well

met in my tower sanctuary
nestled high above the
hallowed halls of castle
ZZAP! 64. As your newly
appointed White Wizard
I welcome you all to
my Chronicles' latest
incarnation in what is surely
set to be new and exciting
quarterly edition of ZZAP!
magazine.

With my shiny new
crystal ball and scrying

bowl at the ready I look
forward to guiding you
all through the world of
Commodore adventure
past and present.

It's been a tough time
for many developers of late
and while all the madness
surrounding lock downs
and pandemics looks set
continue into this new
year, I'm glad to see that
many of you have found
some peace, solace and
happiness in the vibrant
world of Commodore
adventure which continues
to grow, develop and thrive
at an impressive rate.

Indeed! We have a lot
to look forward to this
year with two new text
adventures on the horizon,
one from Berlin based
author Stefan Vogt who's
set to release a director's
cut of his first 'Hibernated'
sci-fi game and its much
anticipated sequel. Then
we have French author
Davide Bucci who will soon
be bringing us the third
and final instalment of his
Emilia Vittorini trilogy with
the game *Silk Dust*. There
are also several RPG type
adventures currently in
development, two of which,

Briley Witch Chronicles and *Meonlawel*, you can read about in this issues news section. It truly is an exciting time for adventure gaming on the Commodore 64/128 and I for one, like many of you look forward to seeing what lies ahead this year.

For our reviews this

month we'll be delving into the world of the mercenary with Roy Riggs' humorous and racy RPG *Hired Sword 2* and then we'll exercising our typing fingers with some remote Island interactive fiction in *Survival Messenger Adventure* by demo group '7th Vision' and development group

'Vintage Computing Carinthia'.

So come my fellow adventurers, let us conclude our proceedings and gather up close together — no social distancing required here — as we gaze into my crystal ball and begin our journey together.

ADVENTURE NEWS

Briley Witch Chronicles coming this year!



dventurers may remember that back in 2019 'Old Whitey' aka

Stuart Williams brought us news of a new & exciting RPG by programmer and author Sarah Jane Avory called the *Briley Witch Chronicles*.

Two years on and I'm pleased to announce that my ravens have returned with some rather exciting news. It would appear that Sarah has recently posted some new 'work in progress' footage on her YouTube channel that shows the game in action and I must say it all looks rather stunning!

The new footage shows witches 'Briley' and 'Alyssa' who are exploring an area called 'the ruins' along with black

cat companion 'Smokey'. Watching the video, we are treated to some examples of the turn-based combat and the various enemies that inhabit the area including a dark mysterious boss like character called 'Rhagazok' Further to this we catch a glimpse into some character interaction,



and an insight into the workings of the inventory and stats menu.

So far it all looks very



well implemented and with some great looking graphics. Sarah hopes to release the finalised version of the game at some point during the first half of 2021 and I for one am very excited to see the finished article.

In the meantime, however you can check out the new footage for yourselves here: <https://youtu.be/OaJwhQP5DE>



New 'Vampire' themed role-playing adventure coming to the C64 / 128



ame developer and creator of European software house

'Commocore' Bartosz Zolynski has been busy working away on his new Commodore role playing adventure called *Meonlawel*. Little is known about the game at the moment other than you are on a quest to avenge your father's death and rid the land of the blood thirsty vampires who plague it in both human and animal form. While many will fall by your trusty silver sword there are rumours of an antidote, but could they be true?

The game promises features such as non-linear gameplay, a day / night

cycle, hi-res graphics, a vast array of weapons and enemies, turn based combat, secret hidden items that'll you'll be able to register on the games website and a great sense of humour. You can even be turned into a vampire yourself which will alter the course of the game.

As well as a digital download Bartosz is looking to release a physical edition of the game on cartridge that will come bundled with a booklet, feelies and audio CD featuring music from the game. A demo release is planned for some time this year and I'll be sure to keep you all informed when my ravens return with any further updates.





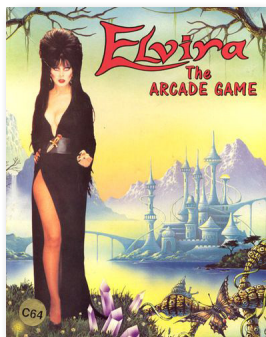
The time I visited...



It was my second trip out to see a software company, but not my last. This is what happened when I, Ian Osborne, travelled north to see a forthcoming C64 game.

He was very angry. The Managing Director of Flair Software, James Neffendorf, was not at all pleased to see the review of his title *Elvira: The Arcade Game* in ZZAP! 64. Not pleased at all. "I was one step away from taking legal action," he explained during an irate telephone conversation. But what had upset him?

We had covered the Flair Software platformer back in ZZAP! 64 Issue



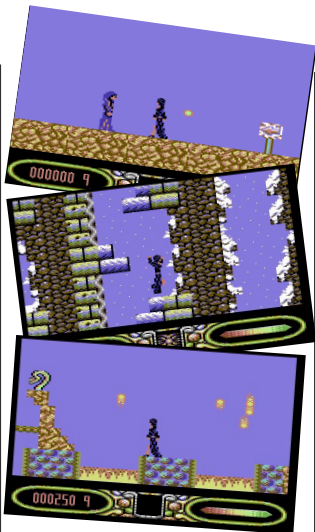
80, and Paul Mellerick (main review) and Alan Green (comment) were not impressed. "The gameplay is staggeringly slow and tedious," argued Paul. "Graphics and animation are similarly crude and uninspiring." If that wasn't enough, "Controlling Elvira is extremely frustrating," and there's a "completely disruptive multi-load

system." Alan hated it too; "Sadly, this game will provide little enjoyment." It scored a lowly 40%.

So when our ad department called Mr Neffendorf to try and flog him some advertising, he was reluctant to part with his money and instead asked to be put through to editorial, and ended up speaking to me. Strangely, our competitors, Commodore Format, had rated the game 80% (if I recall correctly), though their review was rather more critical than you'd expect given the score. James Neffendorf was especially upset that Paul had obliquely referenced this review in his own assessment of the game ("Despite what you might have read elsewhere..."). So who was correct? I diplomatically claimed not to have seen the game, so I couldn't comment on its quality.

To change the subject, I asked what the company was working on now. It seemed they had a new title in development. *Elvira*





It was to be a very different affair; an RPG in the *Eye of the Beholder* mould and a sequel to *Mistress of the Dark*, it would be a disk-only game on the Commodore 64. Again, if I recall correctly, it was to be subtitled *The Jaws of Cerberus* on the Amiga, Atari ST and PC, but simply *Elvira II* on the C64. The respective box arts seem to bear this out.

After talking a little about the forthcoming game, I asked if I could pay a visit to the studio to take a look at it. James was impressed. "Of course," he said, "and you'll find us a very friendly company." Arrangements were made, and it was decided I would go and preview the game around a week later, allowing the in-house programmer to get it into a

Competition Time!

'Twas a terrible night. The wind ran through, er; the weather, erm; lightning cascaded from...' Shit, this isn't going well. When I sat down to write up the *Elvira II* competition for Issue 88, the words just wouldn't come. By lunchtime, I'd got precisely one sentence, having written and rewritten the second one over and again, to no avail.

Thankfully, the team decided to go to the pub at lunchtime; The Bull Hotel, a Newsfield/Impact legend. A couple of pints of bitter later, and the words just came naturally. My writers' block was gone, and I finished the competition text as fast as I could type it in. Was it the pleasant beer buzz that solved the problem, or maybe the break from my computer? I've no idea, but what I wrote went down okay with the team. "It's like reading one of your wet dreams," quipped Phil King. "It's like reading one of mine," replied Steve Shields. Phil was right. *Elvira* can visit my bedroom uninvited any time she likes.





state where he could demo it to me.

Checking with British Rail (remember them?), I found the trip from Ludlow to Flair's home town of Newcastle-on-Tyne would cost £60. As I was under 24 at the time, I could get a third off with a young person's railcard. Trouble is, I didn't have one. As the railcard was £16 I could buy the card and the ticket for less than the unadjusted price of ticket, so after clearing it with Shiela Adams in accounts, I did just that. Hurrah – an immediate £4 saving for the company, and a third off my personal and professional rail travel for a year.

The day before I was due to set off, there was a big change at ZZAP! 64. Steve Shields arrived as

editor. "Sorry to land this on you on your first day mate, but I'm not in the office tomorrow." He was keen to see the damaged relationship between our companies repaired, though, so he gave the trip his blessing.

The big day arrived, so off to Ludlow's quaint little garden shed of a railway station I went. The journey to Newcastle took six hours each way, but that's fine by me. I like long train trips. It lets me catch up on my reading uninterrupted. Six hours and a substantial portion of a paperback later, I reached Newcastle, where I met Flair Software's PR manager, Colin Courtney. We shook hands, and as he drove me to Flair's studio, we had a chat about the C64 and the games industry in general.

Nice bloke. Things were looking promising.

Flair Software was a fairly small studio, as were most in those days. Remember, this was the 8-bit and 16-bit era, long before you needed dozens of programmers to work on each aspect of the game, such as the sound, graphics, the game engine and more. Freeing myself from the backpack I'd taken with me, I opened it up and threw each person there a Crash or ZZAP! 64 t-shirt. We weren't selling them by then, so Roger Kean said it was okay. I'd taken almost enough; there was one for every staff member there, but not for Colin or James. Never mind – I promised to send them each one when I got back to the office.

On to the game. Colin introduced me to the programmer, Bruce Le Feaux, who was sat in front of a monitor with *Elvira II* running on it. Pulling up a chair, we quickly hit it off. He was a top guy; really enthusiastic



about the game and the genre, and judging by what he was showing me, extremely good at his job. It looked superb. Colourful, engaging and deep, it really belied the fact that it was running on an ageing eight-bit computer. A traditional 3D role-playing dungeon crawler, you crept your way through the awesomely realised terrain one step at a time, fighting monsters and solving puzzles as you go. The only downside was at certain places in the game, basically in long corridors, it was impossible to rotate left or right as the graphics hadn't been drawn for



those sections. This was a reasonable compromise. The game already came on four disks, and drawing in walls you didn't need to look at anyway would send this through the roof, taking an inevitable toll on

both the price and the disk swapping.

Having made my notes and played the game, it was time to go home. On the way out of the office I was introduced to James Neffendorf. Shaking hands, he said if I was ever in the area, I should pop in for a cup of tea. I told him I would. Not that I was in the area often, living in Ludlow. Also, Elvira II wasn't the only game they had in production. I was given the review disk for another forthcoming Flair Software release, *Winter Supersports*, then it was back to the station and another six hours on the

[illegible]

train. My work here was done.

Back in the office, while typing up the preview of *Elvira II*, our advertising manager Sheila Jarvis paid us a visit. James Neffendorf had booked an advert. Impact Magazines and Flair Software were friends again.

Unfortunately, we didn't stay friends for long. I liked *Winter Supersports*, as you might remember from my review in ZZAP! 64 Issue 84 (the same issue as the *Elvira II* preview), but Corky, who wrote the comment, didn't. Steve Shields agreed with Corky, and asked if someone had slipped me a length while I was in Newcastle. I assured him no one had, but looking back, I wonder if my trip to Flair Software had led me to be over-generous with the game? I still think Corky's comments were harsh. It didn't suffer from 'vomit inducing graphics' or backdrops that look like 'a liquid laugh after a night on the pop', and if it did, it should have got a much lower score than the 62% he gave it. But was I over-generous with my 82%?

A few months later in ZZAP! Issue 88, we finally reviewed the completed *Elvira II*. As expected, it was a stormer. All the team liked it, and it won

the coveted Sizzler award. We did a second *Elvira* poster in the same issue, a montage of photographs over an Oliver Frey-painted castle scene, and also a competition. It all goes to show we were never shy

about celebrating a great game.

A while later, I met James Neffendorf again at the launch of the Commodore Amiga CD32, and again we got on fine, but that's another story.





THE SCORELORD'S SCORN!

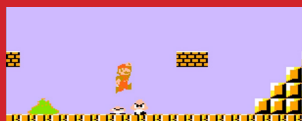
Little Computer People – I scored a gazillion points on Little Computer People
Chris Abbott



"That must have taken years, all in one sitting — respect!"



Mario 64 – I got 40050 in Mario 64, but dont think that it's much!
Kim Ursin



Hyper Sports – Vault: 10.40 (pulled so many somersaults that the counter showed corrupted characters, then I stomped the landing)
Phil Halliwell

I SUCK at every damn game... do I get a "honorable" mention ?

Michele MK Porcu



"You must try harder Michele, see me after school for detention!"

Summer Games 2 – 17.60 metres in the triple jump
Daren Wood



Mega Apocalypse – I remember getting 127000
Andy Empsall Walker

The Sentinel / Wizball / Commando – Completed *The Sentinel* took bloody months!! Completed *Wizball*, scored 32100 on IK+ and looped *Commando* 32 times before finally losing all my lives.

Darren Nevell



"Wow, that is dedication Darren, Archer would be proud of your IK+ score! "



What was originally intended as a visit to Ludlow to celebrate the launch of the re-print of *The Fantasy Art of Oliver Frey* in the local book shop, in fact ended up with a conversation in the local pub (one that Roger, Oli and the original Crash and ZZAP! 64 guys used to frequent back in the day) on bringing back ZZAP! as an Annual.

It was an innocent enough chat— was there any reason why it could not be done, and in fact, do we want to do it? In the same breath, ZZAP!'s sister magazine was discussed and we decided to proceed with that publication first. If it proved successful then a ZZAP! Annual would follow. That meeting was back in May 2017 — roll on to February 2021 and we are about to send our



Oliver Frey, Roger Kean, myself and Jacco van't Riet (Boys Without Brains)

third Annual to print, ZZAP! 64 has been relaunched as an A5 regular magazine and just before Christmas, the IP rights to ZZAP! were transferred to Fusion Retro Books from Future Publishing Ltd. It has so far been a crazy journey.

We have announced that the latest Annual is Roger's last due to him 'finally' retiring and for health reasons — he has now firmly handed over the baton to myself and the

team (some who wrote and indeed edited the original magazines).

We are proud to be holding the ZZAP! 64 flame and are indebted to Roger and Oli for allowing us to make this happen and we truly aim to make you proud. Thanks again guys for your trust in yet another one of your creations!

Oliver Kean

So there you go — the first printed issue of ZZAP! 64 since the tribute issue that was published when I was somewhat younger and less grey.

What you have in your hands is the *Issue 1 Sampler*, just to remind

you what you always loved about ZZAP! 64.

If you like what you see, how about joining up for the full 60-page version, and thereafter subsequent issues every couple of months at www.zzapmagazine.co.uk.

Issue 2 will be out in May — until then you can get in touch with me via chris@zzapmagazine.co.uk with your thoughts, ideas and feedback for the magazine.



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